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# MR. SIDGWICK'S HEDONISM:

## AN EXAMINATION OF

## THE MAIN ARGUMENT OF

# "THE METHODS OF ETHICS"

BY

F. H. BRADLEY

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# PREFACE.

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THE following pages are intended to supply, not a general review or estimate of the 'Methods of Ethics,' but an examination of the main argument of that work, the thesis it supports, and the steps by which it goes to its conclusion.

The position which Mr. Sidgwick's book has taken in the literature of the day fully justifies the length of this examination. The remarks which I found space to make in my Ethical Studies were, I fear, too brief and condensed to express my objections. And I think that a discussion of the subject in detail can hardly fail to be of use to the student of Moral Philosophy.

From the first I have found Mr. Sidgwick's book not easy to understand, and it is probable that in some points I may have misapprehended his meaning. My own belief is that Mr. Sidgwick's argument is in itself not clear, and that the obscurity arises from the omission on his part of any serious attempt to arrive at an understanding of the fundamental preconceptions with which he operates. In this the reader may find I am mistaken; but I cannot doubt that the enquiry, if it does not prove the edifice unstable, will at least bring more clearly into light the nature of the foundation. And this will be a result well worth the labour.

What I have tried to do is, first of all, at the price, I fear, of a great deal of tediousness, to help the reader to master the most prominent conceptions of the book, and to bring to light the obscurity and ambiguous nature of the leading terms; and the equivocal character of the main thesis. Then in Part II. I have entered on the proof of the thesis which is offered, and have endeavoured to show that it is unsatisfactory. Lastly, in Part III. § 8, I have tried to exhibit the real nature of the author's proposed Ethical Science, and to point out some of the objections to which it lies open: and in § 9 I have discussed the problem, partly moral and partly theological, which is raised at the end of Mr. Sidgwick's work. Some general remarks on the 'objective' character of morality have been excluded from want of space.

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## Part I.—The Definitions.

### § I.—*Reason.*

No one, I think, who reads the Methods of Ethics can fail to be struck by the recurrence of the word 'reasonable.' Plainly it is a term we ought to understand, for the Right, the Good, the End, the Desirable, all seem to fall under it[1] and to depend on it for their meaning. It is scarcely saying too much when we say that Mr. Sidgwick's main thesis stands and falls with his view of the 'reasonable.' But when we ask, Has the word been explained with sufficient clearness? I think the answer must be, No.

What is reason? It is defined (27) as 'a faculty which takes cognizance of objective truth.' We shall have to ask hereafter what 'objective' in general means, but here 'objective truth' seems opposed to 'purely subjective phenomena,' 'the sensations of the sentient being' (23), and is 'the same, whether recognised or not, for all Minds or Subjects' (182)[2].

[1] There can be no doubt that 'reasonable,' 'right,' 'ought' all stand for the same idea (29), and as little doubt that 'preferable,' 'desirable,' 'the end' are equivalent. True, 'good' can be distinguished from 'right,' but for our purpose the distinction seems to be of no importance, and (as applied to conduct) they 'coincide substantially' (98). Indeed (80, note) we hear of '"right" and "reasonable," and the equivalent phrase "what ought to be" [done or aimed at]'. I am not sure whether 'good' and 'reasonable' are ever coupled, but the end is the 'end of reason,' and the good is the rational end or ends. It would tend to clearness if we were told at the beginning which of these terms are convertible, or at all events whether we have to do with one or more than one 'fundamental notion.'

[2] It is right that I should say here that I cannot reconcile with this Mr. Sidgwick's view as to Egoism being reasonable. See below, p. 36, note, and p. 51.

But in what way does reason apprehend truth? Is it merely 'discursive?' No, 'it seems . . . to belong to reason not merely to judge of the relation of means to ends, or of the consistency of maxims: but also to determine the ultimate ends and true first principles of action' (26). This 'operation' is 'intuitive.'

Reason, so far, is not merely discursive but also 'intuitive;' and the question which remains is as to the nature of the 'objective truth' which it apprehends. For

'we do not say, in physics, that individual facts are apprehended by the Reason: we consider this faculty to be conversant in its discursive operation with the relation of judgments or propositions; and the intuitive reason (which is here rather in question) we restrict to the apprehension of universal truths, such as the axioms of logic and mathematics. Now, as I shall presently notice, it is not uncommonly held that the moral faculty judges primarily of individual cases, applying directly to these the general notion of Duty, and deciding intuitively what ought to be done by this person in these particular circumstances. On this view the moral apprehension is more analogous to Sense-Perception than to Rational Intuition (as commonly understood): and hence the term Moral Sense has been preferred by many, who did not mean to suggest thereby any scepticism as to the reality of moral (as distinct from psychological) truth. But it is so important to avoid this suggestion, that it seems better to use generally the term Reason: provided it be not supposed to mean anything more specific than "a faculty which takes cognizance of objective truth."' (26–7.)

We find, however, that it does hereafter mean something more specific. We find (85) that, in speaking of 'the popular view of Conscience,' our writer says:—

'This view may be called ultra-intuitional, as it recognizes simple immediate intuitions alone and rejects all modes of reasoning to moral conclusions. But it may equally well be called ultra-empirical as it emphasizes the authority of particular moral experiences in comparison with universal rules or axioms. This then we may describe as one phase or variety of the Intuitional method, involving really a negation of method, and excluding what is more strictly called Reason from moral decisions.'

And then comes this note to the word Reason, 'i.e. the faculty of apprehending universal truth.'

It would appear then that in future we have to deal with a strict and a loose use of Reason, but I cannot find that in the sequel, when Reason comes in, we are clearly told *which* Reason is meant. On this point I have found Mr. Sidgwick very hard to understand, but I will try to put before the reader what seems to be his doctrine.

I think that Reason stands for the faculty which apprehends 'universal truth,' 'general rules,' 'abstract moral notions,' 'moral axioms' (87): and further that it includes as well the *reasoning* to particular cases from 'general moral maxims' whether these latter are 'universal moral intuitions' (190) or not. The word *may* cover more, but I doubt it.

Now (this is an important matter) is 'conscience,' in the sense of a judgment on particular cases (85), irrational? I think not. 'Even when the decision of the moral faculty is felt to relate primarily to some particular action, we cannot really exclude generality from the notion of the action thus judged to be right' (86). 'The moral truth apprehended will be intrinsically universal, though particular in our first apprehension of it' (*ibid.*). And (189) we find that all moral judgments have a 'potential universality.' The result seems to be that 'conscience' is not irrational; but it certainly is 'unreasoned.' 'Reflective conscientious persons' are 'inclined to bring' each case under some general rule (*ibid.*).

In both cases, of the immediate and the reflective conscience alike, I take it that reason gives, or at least apprehends, the general; but the latter case is 'reasoned;' there is an explicit reasoning which brings the particular as an instance under the universal rule. Then what are we to say about the former case? In what sense is reason present in non-reflective conscience? Does reason here give a product in which both elements exist but are not distinguished? Is reason here in a 'potential' or 'intrinsical' or 'latent' state in which it gives an individual intuition? That is one view. Or are we to say that this intuition in which the two elements are not made explicit is not really reason at all? That is another

view. On this 'potentially universal' would mean that you can by reflection separate the two elements implicit in the individual judgment, and then the universal element, when explicit, is apprehended by reason, though not before[1]. But which view is our author's I cannot say.

I am afraid that this discussion may appear to the reader mere verbal trifling, but he will find, I think, on reflection, that the subject of 'potential universality' calls for a clearer explanation than it has received, and again that it is a most important matter to know whether reason apprehends the individual or only the general. When we come to argue from the nature of reason to the nature of the end, this difference must seriously affect our conclusion. But for the present all we can say is that what is true for reason seems in the main to be that which is true in general or in the abstract.

## § 2.—*Practical Reason.*

So far we have had to do with reason as cognitive, and, now we are come to practical reason, the light grows dimmer and dimmer, and we see little more than that we are encountered by at least some of the difficulties of Kant's ethical dualism.

'The real end of Reason' is the same as 'the absolutely good' (391); but how can *reason* give an *end?* 'The Moral Reason is a Spring of Action' (x). Reason 'dictates.' 'Reason prompts us to a certain kind of action' (29–30). Reason has '"a categorically imperative" function' (24). So far there seems to be no doubt.

'Acting rationally' is acting 'from an impulse in harmony with an intellectual apprehension of an objective rule, or intrinsically desirable end' (43). 'That in us which claims

[1] I fail to understand Mr. Sidgwick when (27) he speaks of a view which holds that 'the moral faculty judges primarily of individual cases, applying directly to these the general notion of Duty, and deciding intuitively what ought to be done by this person in these particular circumstances.' His language here implies that the general notion is explicit, and that to some extent the judgment is reflective; but this can hardly be what he means to say.

authority is never a mere sentiment, but always a faculty cognisant of an objective rule or imperative which exists independently of its effect on our feelings, and such a faculty is what we must mean by Reason' (62). 'There actually is found in man a certain impulse to do what is reasonable as such' (x). There is a 'central desire to do Right as such' (347).

But what does all this mean? I confess I cannot say. Reason seems to be 'a spring of action' in this sense, that when reason says, Something ought to be done, then there goes with that a desire to do what reason orders. So much seems clear, but it does not tell us how reason can order.

Are we to say that in practical reason thought and will are united in such a way that the object of this faculty is no mere *fact* which we recognize, but an *end*, an idea which in us calls for its reality? Then what need for an adventitious desire to turn reason into a 'spring of action'? Are we to say that practical reason is *made* practical by this desire, that the addition of this desire to theoretic reason constitutes practical reason? This does not seem to be our author's view. For

> 'It is enough if it be granted that there exists in all moral agents as such a permanent desire ... to do what is right or reasonable because it is such: so that when our practical reason recognizes any course of conduct as right, this desire immediately impels us with a certain force towards such conduct.' (27.)

Clearly then, even apart from the desire, reason is still practical, though not perhaps 'a spring of action.'

But then how can reason give an *end?* How can it 'prompt' or 'dictate' or be 'categorically imperative'? Is there, beside the desire which makes it a 'spring,' *another* desire which makes it practical? If so, what is it after all which gives the end? If not so, how can reason 'prescribe' and order, as well as perceive? Is to be 'cognisant of an imperative' the same thing as to give an order?

It is possible that our author's view may be that desire gives the end, while reason qualifies it. *What* the end is reason does not know, but, *given* the end, it further determines its nature, and so brings into play a third element, the

'central desire to do Right as such.' If so, the end is hardly the 'end of Reason,' and reason is no more categorical, but hypothetical, or at best, with co-ordinate authority. But I do not think this is what Mr. Sidgwick means.

The following questions I think need an answer. Is reason nothing but 'the slave of the passions'? Does desire give the end and reason calculate the means? Certainly our author does not hold this. Does reason desire or will? This again he seems reluctant to affirm. But if it does not desire and will, how can the end be the end of reason? If reason is no more than 'cognisant of an imperative,' how is it practical? Is my reason practical when I read an Act of Parliament? Does my sight 'prompt' or 'dictate' when I see a police notice on the wall? When I hear the word Forward, are my ears 'categorically imperative'?

Does reason tell you what to do, or does it tell you only what you are told to do? Does it give orders, or do no more than carry them? And then *whose* orders does it carry?

To explain our *obedience* to the order by bringing in a desire for the reasonable does not help us at all. The question is not, Does an emotion attend the *recognition* of a mere fact. For in morality we have not to do with a mere fact, with this or that command which is prescribed from without, seen perhaps by reason, and then obeyed by desire and will: nor, I think, does our author hold this. In morality we prescribe to and dictate to ourselves. We do not perceive that there *is* an order, we *give* that order, and we *put* an end before ourselves to be done. And how can reason do this? If we abstract from desire and will, what is left of 'end' and 'ought' and 'imperative'? Has 'This is my *end*' any sense when desire is kept out, or comes in but to say '*And* I will do it'? Does not end mean will, and my end my will?

I can find no answers to these questions in the Methods of Ethics. It is not fair to our author, I admit, to ask him for a psychology which he does not undertake to give. It is fair to point out that the psychological doctrine, which (whatever it may be) he most undeniably does put forward, is either wholly obscure, or else labours under well-

known difficulties which are not met, but which, if not met, must gravely affect his thesis.

The question of this section, if we put it from the other end, is, What is the relation of desire to the desirable? and that word leads us to the following section.

## § 3.—*The Desirable and Pleasure.*

I am afraid the reader will be tired already by these questions about words, but we can not go on until we have asked what 'desirable' means. In ordinary English it is the same as what 'is to be' or 'should be desired,' but it *may* also stand for that which simply can be desired, or does excite desire. The latter usage, I believe, has no place in our spoken language, and even in literature perhaps is obsolete, but still it exists. How does Mr. Sidgwick use the word?

When it appears in his writing apart from its connection with ethical questions I think it *always* bears the first sense. But what is its more technical meaning? Passages (at the foot of pp. 137, 318) show that it is not equivalent to 'desired'; and (93 note) we find '"Good"="intrinsically preferable or desirable,"' and again (391) we hear of 'the real end of Reason, the absolutely Good or Desirable.' Clearly then desirable or preferable=good or end (cf. 60, 133, 183).

Nor can the phrases 'intrinsically,' 'absolutely,' 'objectively,' 'ultimately,' 'in itself' be taken to differentiate desirable and good, for they are applied to both; 'the ultimate end, or entity, regarded as intrinsically good and desirable' (66; cf. 369, 391, 392 note). And moreover we find 'good' and 'desirable' coupled without qualification (95 last line; cf. 94, 369), and (9) 'desirable' is used as one notion with 'intrinsically good,' or 'end which Reason regards as ultimate.'

So far we see that 'desirable'='good' or 'end.'

'Let then pleasure be defined as feeling that is preferable or desirable, considered merely as feeling' (118). 'Pleasure

being defined as "feeling judged to be preferable or desirable considered merely as feeling"[1] (xii). 'To mean by Pleasure only Preferable or Desirable Feeling of whatever kind' (372). 'Happiness, or the sum of such feelings as, at the time that they are felt, are immediately known to be intrinsically desirable' (368). Mark here '*intrinsically*.' 'The kind of feeling which is most pleasant or preferable as feeling' (162).

What is all this? The end of the argument being to show that pleasure and good are the same, is it possible that here at the beginning we have 'good' and 'end' inserted into the definition of pleasure? I think we shall find this really is the case. The audacious *petitio principii* which commended itself to Mr. Mill (365), is perhaps more veiled in our author's pages, but through its thin disguise we recognize the old cause of our errors, the unconscious equivocation by which desirable means indifferently, What I like, or, What I ought to like, just as the conclusion suggests[1].

I think the reader will search in vain for any passage in which Mr. Sidgwick discriminates these two meanings of 'desirable.' In his argument it is the second which is prominent, but in his definition of pleasure he has the first in view; if, that is to say, he really does in his own mind distinguish between them. Let us see what the definition of pleasure is.

Pleasure is 'the kind of feeling which pleases us, which we like or prefer[2]' (114). In short, it is 'agreeable sensation' (33, 41) or 'agreeable feeling' (x).

So far we have seen that desirable or preferable can pass either for pleasant or good, and so is a ready means for iden-

[1] It is interesting to see that in his remarks on Mr. Mill's proof of Utilitarianism, our author calls attention to the fact that in this 'desirable' = what one *ought* to desire (365), and instructive to notice that he seems unaware of Mr. Mill's equivocation. He understands the latter writer to make an *inference* 'from the universal desiredness to the desirability of Happiness' (366); against which interpretation I will simply refer the reader to the passage as Mr. Sidgwick himself quotes it (365).

[2] I am anxious not to disturb the exposition by avoidable criticism, but I must point out that to insert the conception of *preference* into the definition of pleasure seems wholly indefensible.

tifying these terms. And now we must ask more narrowly as to this pleasure which is the end for Hedonism.

Pleasure we saw was feeling that is desirable as feeling, and now what is feeling? That question must be answered before we can proceed.

We hear (76–7) of a 'certain state or quality of the consciousness of the agent which we call Pleasure or Satisfaction,' and this leads us to doubt, first, whether pleasure be a feeling or the quality of a feeling[1], and second, whether feeling is the same as consciousness. The latter point is of great importance because, as we know, there is no psychical phenomenon whatever which 'consciousness' has not been used to cover.

Pleasure (389) is 'to include the highest and most refined kinds of preferable or desirable consciousness.' Happiness is 'the most pleasant consciousness conceivable' (19). 'Happiness was explained to be preferable or desirable feeling or consciousness' (369). And (78) we see 'a pleasure' may mean 'a whole state of consciousness which is only partly pleasurable.'

Of course if our author likes to identify consciousness and feeling he has a right to do so, but then we have a right to ask him to be consistent in his usage. This I think he is not.

We find (52; cf. 164) that 'passive' and 'active consciousness' are distinguished, and the former identified with 'pleasure or pain or desire or aversion.' 'Changes in the train of ideas and feelings that constitutes our conscious life' (52). 'Conscious existence, the stream of action and feeling' (102). 'Conscious life includes besides actions the whole range of feeling' (103). And (179) action and feeling are distinguished. Again (131–2) 'cognitive' consciousness is distinguished from 'presentative consciousness,' and further the latter from feeling[2].

[1] See below, p. 16, and 30, note.

[2] I am not sure whether it has any bearing on the subject, but in fairness I should say that (164) Mr. Sidgwick distinguishes 'our faculties' from 'the mental phenomena which result from their exercise,' of which latter alone we are 'directly cognisant' (cf. 193). The faculties I take to be the same as the

In short, while on the one hand feeling and consciousness seem convertible, on the other hand consciousness is by far the wider term, and covers the whole self. We find (171) 'life or consciousness;' and the result of this somewhat loose terminology is that instead of 'agreeable sensation or feeling' we can write if we please 'desirable conscious life.' And this is no mere inference of our own, but, as we shall see, Mr. Sidgwick does actually do it in the very crisis of his argument (373). Must we not say then that as in 'desirable' we had a *petitio principii*, so now in the wavering phrase 'consciousness,' which is the same as feeling, and yet includes thought and action, and which enables us to write Life for the sake of life, instead of Pleasure for pleasure's sake, we have a considerable *ignoratio elenchi?*

I think we must say this, but we must add that the confusion slides in in the argument, and that in the definition our author avoids it. Returning now to the subject of pleasure let us ask in what sense is this defined to be the end?

The vital point is this. Is *the pleasant* the end? or, Is *pleasure* the end? The former question we may answer in the affirmative and yet be not one step nearer Hedonism. But if we say, The end is pleasure as distinct from that which is pleasant, then that is Hedonism. And our author does answer the question so. He does not say clearly whether mere pleasure is a feeling or only the quality of a feeling, though the latter seems to be his doctrine (76–7); but this distinction is I think of little importance here. Mr. Sidgwick is perfectly clear on these points that 'Feeling cannot be conceived to exist otherwise than as it is felt—its manner of existence is its being felt' (117). 'The pleasantness of

'possibilities' or 'tendencies' (whatever they are) which, in addition to the 'actual existence,' i.e. 'particular states,' constitute our being (102–3). I give this view because I feel so little at home with Mr. Sidgwick that I cannot say whether it may not be relevant here. But in any case the confusion would remain. For while as we saw on the one hand feeling = consciousness; we have again 'the transitory phenomena' (which appear to be the 'effects' of the 'possibilities') described as 'actions or feelings' (193). So again 'feeling or cognition' (23; cf. 102–3, 170).

the feeling is a purely subjective fact' (116). We are to 'separate in thought any state of consciousness from all its objective circumstances and conditions . . . and contemplate it merely as the transient feeling of a single subject' (*ibid.*). 'All pleasures are understood to be so called because they have a common property of pleasantness, and may therefore be compared in respect of this common property' (78). The end is 'the sum of pleasures valued in proportion to their pleasantness' (xi). And from p. 116 we see that pleasantness is the one preferable quality of any state of consciousness when considered as mere feeling.

The end is the pleasantness of pleasant feelings, and the greatest surplus of that to the whole creation, 'the innumerable multitude of living beings, present and to come' (373). The end is not the pleasant merely; that which is pleasant is only a means to the end, and, strictly speaking, nothing is the end but pleasantness and the maximum surplus of that.

This is the thesis which our author has to maintain, and before I go on to criticise it I should like to point out that we have already got the means of proving something very like it. If we write '*an* end' for '*the* end,' and leave out 'maximum surplus,' we can demonstrate thus.

Happiness or pleasure is desirable feeling or consciousness, and what is desirable is good or end, therefore pleasure is end or good. And the desirable or good must be reasonable, which means universal or at least objective, hence pleasure is an end as universal or objective, i.e. not as the pleasure of this or that man but as pleasure in general. So far we demonstrate from our definitions. And to prove our whole thesis we may add, Is there anything desirable but conscious life, or even life? But pleasure is that, and that is pleasure. So pleasure is *the* one end. Further, since you cannot distinguish pleasures by quality, you must do it by quantity, and hence maximum of pleasure is the end. Q. E. D.

And the moral of this section is that a good definition saves argument.

## § 4.—*The End.*

The end is 'the sum of pleasures valued in proportion to their pleasantness,' and we have now to criticise this. For further remarks on the subject I must refer to my Ethical Studies, but there are two main points which I cannot pass over; one the possibility of comparing the pleasantness of pleasures, and the other the nature of the greatest sum.

I. And first it would appear that the abstraction of pleasantness from the pleasant, in order to the pursuit of a maximum of the former, is impossible to execute. You cannot abstract and compare so as to arrange the world of pleasant things in an order of quantitative pleasantness.

The question, I take it, is *not* whether by abstraction you can have a science of quantity in general, nor again whether in particular you are *ever* able to say one feeling is more pleasant than another. There is no dispute between me and Mr. Sidgwick on either of these points. The facts are obvious. The question *is*, (1) whether you can compare *all* pleasures in this way, and (2) whether you can compare *any* pleasures, so as to express them as quantities of units of pleasantness, reduced to the same denomination. Can you add and substract pleasures, and say, This lot will be greater, and so much greater, than that lot?

If you cannot do this latter, if you can only, taking any two pleasures, say, One is greater than the other, but can give neither the quantitative relation of one to the other, and still less the quantitative relation of one imagined lot to another lot, what then, I would ask, becomes of the 'calculus,' and, with it, of scientific Hedonism? And, secondly, to come to the first point, if it is not true that all pleasures can be compared as degrees of pleasantness, if the ideas of past pleasures are seldom exact copies of the reality, if they are too heterogeneous to be always compared, and if this holds *à fortiori* of pleasures in prospect; if, again, the changing mood of the subject conditions the quantity of pleasantness in a way not always to be calculated, then once more the 'calculus' is seen to be an impossibility.

It is unnecessary for me to enter on these objections, since partly they speak for themselves, and, in addition, I can refer to Mr. Sidgwick's book (pp. 120–130) for a discussion which in the main confirms them sufficiently. So that when we hear from him (Mind, V. p. 36) that 'we can perfectly well compare a pleasure felt under any given conditions with any other, however otherwise conditioned, and pronounce it equal or unequal; and we surely require no more than this to enable us to take "amount of pleasure" as our standard for deciding between alternatives of conduct,' we may content ourselves with remarking that his assertion is not only in direct contradiction with the facts of life, but is also irreconcileable with his own more sober views.

II. And, to come now to the second main head, the 'greatest sum of pleasures' is open to very serious objection.

(i) The cardinal point in my opinion is that the Good must be a whole, and that hence a mere aggregate is not the Good. The true End is not put together out of counted units, but the Hedonistic End is a mere addition of particulars. 'Irrelevant metaphysic' as any such consideration may be for our author, I hold it to be fatal to the greatest-pleasure doctrine in any form.

(ii) The next point is that, if by greatest sum we mean an infinite quantity, then that is a self-contradictory idea, which can indeed be aimed at, but by no possibility can be realised (*vide* Eth. Stud. pp. 70, 89).

(iii) Neither in his book nor in his article does our author tell us whether for him the sum is infinite or finite. A definition of happiness[1] (Methods, 19) points to the former view, but there is no certainty. If I knew that Mr. Sidgwick held to the infinite sum I would at once leave the matter here, remarking at the same time that he gives no hint of

[1] The definition of 'greatest happiness' on p. 109 tells us nothing. I think the reader will find (on such a minor point I will not burden him with references) that Mr. Sidgwick is somewhat wavering in his use of the term 'happiness.'

a solution of the problem of approximation to an endless sum.

But I do not suppose our author is prepared to say that the sum is infinite; and, though left in darkness, I must point out some difficulties which meet us when we take it as finite.

We may consider the sum either (*a*) as a series in time of units or groups of units, or (*b*) as a co-existing collection. I will take the series first.

(*a*) If a man is to have an end he can realize, then he must be able to say, It is mine, I possess it. And so with humanity, or the sentient creation generally; if there is a realizable end for them, there must be some time at which this end can be realized. But a sum of successive feelings is not such an end; for these pleasures do not exist as a sum, and to have the sum at any moment is impossible. Well but, I shall hear, is it not possible to go through the pleasures to the last, to sum the series, and to say, I have had them all? and have we not here an end which can be realized?

Taking first the case of the individual man, I answer, Yes doubtless, if you think that a man's end can be realized after he has ceased to be, and that it is enough that some one else, when he is dead, should say, He has summed the series, and attained the end. For myself I hold that a man's end is not realized at all unless during his existence, and that a good, which my whole life long I must be without, and which comes to me only with my extinction, is no good for me and not my good at all.

But Mr. Sidgwick does not hold *my* sum of pleasures to be the end. For him the end is the sum of the pleasures of the sentient creation, or, at the least, of humanity. But if this sum is a series in time I do not see how it ever is complete as a collection, so that any one can say humanity has realized the end by having had the sum, and I do not see who is to say it, and in fact I see only that I am using words which to me have no meaning[1].

[1] See more in Appendix, note A.

(*b*) Dismissing then the sum as a series, let us take it as a finite co-existing aggregate. Then the end will be that at any time the sentient world should be having the greatest possible quantity of pleasantness. In this case the realization of the *sum* lies open I think to no logical objection.

But *greatest possible* sum at once lands us in difficulties. What does it mean? When and in what sense can we say that I and the sentient world are having a greatest possible sum of pleasure?

I suppose the answer must be that the actual is that which under all the conditions was possible. One of these conditions is the direction of our energy towards increase of pleasure, and the total result (if the energy is so directed) we call the greatest possible sum, an end which can logically be realized wholly, and is really gained approximately. And I think, if it is clearly understood that we are dealing, not with an indefinite, but with a limited sum, that this answer so far may stand.

But if this is Mr. Sidgwick's answer, as perhaps it may be (I can only guess), yet, though it is true that not everything I have urged elsewhere (Eth. Stud. 89, and note) is applicable to our author, since he rejects the Hedonistic determination of the will, for all that we are by no means at the end of our difficulties.

The end is to get as much as we can. The realization of that is the *summum bonum*. If we suppose that at a given period of the world's history energy has been so far as was possible directed towards gaining pleasure, then the *summum bonum* is now realized, whatever the amount of the pleasure gained. Perfect virtue thus is and must be perfect happiness, and every failure to get perfect happiness is so much vice in oneself or others. An edifying conclusion, if reached by a somewhat strange road. But Hedonism, if it accepts this result, collides at once with ordinary notions of happiness. To say, If all had done and did their duty we should all be perfectly happy, no matter how small our surplus of pleasure —happiness at the next moment may be increased or diminished, but if all do their duty, the greatest possible

sum of pleasures is at every moment realized, whatever be the fractional surplus of pleasure over pain—is surely a somewhat paradoxical assertion. But if we refuse to accept this hypothetical conclusion, then we fall back upon the unlimited quantity.

I have shown elsewhere (Eth. Stud. 95 note) that it will not help us if we take mere increase of pleasure as the end; and our result so far is that, even if the common Hedonistic psychology be dropped, and the end be taken neither as an infinite sum, nor as a successive series which must be summed before it is realized, we are in sharp collision with ordinary notions, though not at present in contradiction with ourselves.

But if we keep to Mr. Sidgwick, it seems to me that we shall have to contradict ourselves. He has not merely rejected the Hedonistic determination of the will, but has betaken himself to 'Freedom.' What he means by Free Will he has (as usual) not told us, yet, so far as we can see, in the sphere in which it holds, it is the same as pure chance.

If this is so we are at once in trouble. The realization of the greatest possible sum had a meaning when we could say, Here was a complex of conditions, concurring causes (or whatever else you like to call them), and this, which is actual, is the greatest possible result from that complex. The actual is what was possible. But when Free Will is brought in can we say this any longer? In the complication we are considering, acts of will are an element, and, if (as I understand our author does) you decline to say, This result which did follow *must* have followed, then you leave a reserve of possibility in the will, and the actual no longer is all that was possible. Hence greatest possible sum becomes a phrase without meaning. You never can say we have got that, because pure chance is admitted into the matter, and there is no telling that the wills of the agents might not, under all the conditions, have produced something else and something more; nor do I see how any exact limit can be put to the quantity of their action. Greatest possible actuality ceases in short to have a meaning when pure chance is once let in. It

is a fiction, and a fiction is not an end which you can realize either wholly or, I think, approximately.

And here I will leave the subject. It would be an endless task to attempt to anticipate every sense in which the sum of pleasures can be taken, and it is probable that much of the above may be beside the mark. It is hard to discuss a man's opinions when you do not know what they are; and if our author has ever asked himself the meaning of 'the sum,' he has at present not imparted his answer to the public.

The questions which call for a discussion are these. Is the sum limited or unlimited? If limited, is it to be taken as a series or as a co-existing aggregate? If the latter, what is the exact meaning of greatest possible sum? If it is to be considered as a series, has not the series to be completed before it is realized? and, if so, when and how is it completed? Is the end mere approximation? and again, Can you be said to approximate to the impossible? Is once more the sum infinite? And, if it is so, is it not a fiction? No Hedonist, I think, can fairly refuse to enter on these questions; and then there remains the 'irrelevant' metaphysic, which I do not ask Mr. Sidgwick but do ask the reader to consider, Is not the end a whole, and, if so, can it be a mere collection or aggregate or series?

And now after this wearisome discussion, for the length of which I do not think that I am responsible, let us leave the criticism of 'greatest sum of pleasures' and try to see how this sum can be a 'real end of Reason.' We did not get very clear on Reason, and so must not wonder if this point too remains somewhat obscure. Does Reason give the mere abstraction of pleasure in general? Then pleasure of others and amount of pleasure both fall outside it. Does it give us the intuition of a collection of pleasures without reference to this or that subject, and is 'so great' or 'greatest' included in this intuition? That does seem a great deal to ask of Reason. And then is the intuition universal or individual? Does, once more, Reason not give the end at all but only qualify it? Is both 'pleasure' and 'sum of pleasures' given

as the end apart from Reason, and does the latter merely add 'objective' to this ready-made end? Then, as we have said, the end is hardly the 'end of Reason.' Does, again, an intuition of Reason tell me that my greatest sum of pleasure is the end, but tell me at the same time that my end is 'objective' and the same for all subjects? Perhaps. I can not say.

But what is meant by the objectivity of the end? In one sense it is not 'objective,' because all pleasures are merely subjective. Nor in another sense is it objective, because it ought to be and therefore is not[1]. It seems to be objective in the following sense. We get somehow the notion of pleasure and greatest sum of pleasures as the end of our being, and, whether reason comes in or is there already, the result of reason is that the end is objective and right. And objective seems to mean this. Strip from sum of pleasures all reference to myself, and it ceases to be *my* pleasure. Strip from its pursuit all reference to any one in particular, and it is a pursuit for no one in particular, and that means (*how?*) what is imperative on all alike. I can not venture to assert that this is our author's doctrine, and so will not risk a mistaken and wasted criticism. All I will say is that, *if* this is his doctrine, then 'objective[2]' means 'abstract,' and, with the abstraction from the desiring and willing individual, there is no more possibility of the objective being a goal to all, or imperative on any one. If it is not the end of any one in particular, then it is not the end in general or at all.

The question of the 'reasonable' as 'objective' will return on us when we try to understand Mr. Sidgwick's view of ethical science. But now we have partly realized the doubtful nature of our terms, and seen some of the psycho-

[1] There are some noticeable sayings on the opposition of 'ought' and 'is' on pp. 3, 92, 94. If Mr. Sidgwick had not qualified this statement on p. 5, he could hardly have avoided the conclusion, Nothing which is, ought to be, and might even be taken to hold, Whatever is not ought to be. I do not think this is a mere matter of verbal accuracy.

[2] I have been forced to ask myself the question what 'objective' means in the Methods of Ethics; but as it is not *necessary* for the reader to follow this enquiry, I have printed it in the Appendix (note B).

logical and metaphysical difficulties which beset our main thesis, it is time to ask what proof have we got that it is true? How are we to show that the greatest surplus of units of pleasantness is the end?

## Part II.—The Argument.

### § 5.—*The Intuition*[1].

We have seen what the Hedonistic end is, and we have now to prove that this is not merely *an* end but *the* end, that nothing else whatever is strictly speaking an end at all.

The method is simple. First, we show that nothing is ultimately good unless it enters into relation to consciousness of some kind. Then we separate what is left into 'objective' and 'subjective,' and finding the former is not the end, we lastly put the 'subjective' as the end and accept that.

Against the first step I have nothing to say, provided that consciousness is taken to mean (as we have seen it does mean) life, or mind in the widest sense. But against the rest of the proof I will make at once two preliminary objections.

(i) It must be shown (not asserted) that the alternative of objective and subjective is tenable. Failing this, the proof goes. (ii) It is a logical error to argue, Because A is not desirable without B, therefore B by itself is desirable; or again, Because A + B and B (by itself) are both desirable, therefore nothing but B is desirable. In other words however correct it is, having both A and B isolated, to say B is better than A, and A is not worth having, yet you cannot possibly go from that to, Therefore B is as good as A and B together, and B is the only good. We shall see the application of this directly.

To proceed. We accept the first proposition that consciousness (=life) is the end of life; but we at once demur to the alternative of subjective and objective. We say, first,

[1] Throughout this I presuppose in the reader an acquaintance with the chapter on the 'Summum Bonum.'

that this is a false alternative, and next, that it does not carry the required conclusion. What our author has to show is not merely that pleasure is *a* good or a *better* good, but that it is *the* good and the *only* good.

To the falseness of the alternative we shall return, but first of all we shall take the question (as we have a right to do), Apart from alternatives is pleasure for pleasure's sake the good? Is it even by itself good or desirable at all?

The appeal I understand to be 'to the intuitive judgment of each reader' (371). In what sense it is to his intuitive reason I hardly know.

We know what the Hedonistic end is. It is 'the sum of pleasures valued in proportion to their pleasantness.' It is in short Pleasantness as the one end, all else as means. And now I ask the reader to put this before himself as a moral agent, and say not Do I like it? but Is it the end of my being, the ultimate good, the real end of Reason? Is it for me and for others the one thing worth having for itself?

That I submit is the only fair way to put the issue. How does Mr. Sidgwick put it?

> 'But now, when we have so far limited the application of the notion Good to conscious life, it may seem that our result is really identical with what we call Happiness. For Happiness was explained to be preferable or desirable feeling or consciousness: and if we say that all other things called good are only means to the end of making conscious life intrinsically better or more desirable, is not this saying that they are means to the end of happiness?' (369).

Now I think the reader will see why we spent so much time over 'desirable' and 'consciousness.' But it is not fair to Mr. Sidgwick to stop here. The passage goes on,

> 'On the other hand, it seems clear that in ordinary thought consciousness, active and passive, is conceived to be preferable on other grounds than its pleasantness.'

Our author now proceeds to the alternative we shall discuss hereafter, and puts the question, Are mere 'objects' desirable?

'But can this, on reflection, be maintained? It seems to me that it certainly cannot. Here I can only appeal to the intuitive judgment of each reader, when the question is fairly placed before it. For my own part, if I have any intuition at all respecting the ultimate ends of action, it seems to me that I can see this: that these objective relations of the conscious subject, when distinguished in reflective analysis from the consciousness accompanying and resulting from them, are not ultimately and intrinsically desirable: any more than material or other objects are, when considered out of relation to conscious existence altogether. Admitting that we have actual experience of such preferences as have just been described, of which the ultimate object is something that is not Feeling: it still seems to me that when such objects are conceived to come, not apparently or transiently, but really and finally, into competition with Happiness, we cannot maintain the rationality of such preferences' (371–2).

All I shall say at present on this passage is that it plainly does not carry the required conclusion, i.e. 'a mere pursuit of universal happiness.' Admit every word of it, and yet it gives us no right to say the end is nothing but the subjective. Better does not=the only thing good. Nor again by showing that an element by itself is not *the* end or *an* end can you prove that it is *nothing but* a means.

After accounting for the aversion 'we find in Common Sense' 'to admit Happiness (when explained to mean a sum of pleasures) to be the sole ultimate end and standard of right conduct;' and after again defining Pleasure as 'Preferable or Desirable Feeling of whatever kind' (372), where the reader will not forget the ambiguity of the terms, the Hedonistic end is once more presented to us for our acceptance.

'But Universal Happiness, desirable conscious life for the innumerable multitude of living beings, present and to come, seems an End that satisfies our imagination by its vastness, and sustains our resolution by its comparative permanence and security.'

I am very far from accusing Mr. Sidgwick of intentional unfairness. But I must leave it to the reader to judge whether this is the right way to put the question. The ambiguity (for a time removed), as at the beginning (369), so now at the end wraps the issue in a cloud. No one, I am

sure, who himself kept the problem in view could state it in such a way; and the crowning phrase 'desirable conscious life' combines *petitio principii* with *ignoratio elenchi* after a manner not easy to parallel. The thesis to be proved is that mere pleasure is the end. Mr. Sidgwick writes conscious life for pleasure, and adds desirable (which *means* end) to the definition.

Whether our author feels secure in the position which so far he has taken I can hardly tell. At all events he does not remain there, but moves to what he evidently considers the decisive point.

'If we simplify the question by supposing only a single sentient conscious being in the universe, it then is surely evident that nothing can be ultimately 'good' for such a being except his own happiness.' (374; cf. 378, 360, 392 note.)

Mr. Sidgwick, as I understand, appeals here to 'Common Sense,' and I am quite ready to go before that tribunal; but first there are one or two questions to be asked. *Can* we so 'simplify the question?' Have we a *right* so to simplify it? And on our author's theory *do* we simplify it so?

(i) The supposition of one finite conscious being in a material universe, which Mr. Sidgwick introduces so modestly, is an utter impossibility, not only according to at least one half of philosophical theory, but also according to current religious belief.

(ii) It is simple dogmatic individualism to assume that the end for all is the mere multiple of the end for one, which therefore can be found by isolating an unit. Here again we must say that an author has a right to make what assumptions he pleases, but surely not to introduce them tacitly.

(iii) The supposition is so far from simplifying the question that it at once involves Mr. Sidgwick in contradiction with himself. The words 'ultimately and intrinsically good or desirable' (392, note) mean the same as 'objectively good' or 'reasonable.' But this was valid not for one individual as such, but was 'the same for all minds.' Is it not then a contradiction, given but one conscious individual, that his end

should be objective? But, if not objective, then not ultimately good.

But if this does not hold, and if one individual may consider *his* pleasure to be objectively desirable, then the argument against egoism (see below) will be shaken if not destroyed [1].

The only way that I see out of this dilemma is to suppose the single sentient to have an intuition of Reason, which tells him that pleasure in general, or in the abstract, is the end of his being: whereon he proceeds dutifully to pursue *his own* pleasure simply for the sake of pleasure in general. But I do not understand Mr. Sidgwick to maintain this.

Now I think if we pleased we should after this have a right to refuse to go before 'Common Sense' with Mr. Sidgwick's supposition. Nevertheless we will not refuse. Figure yourself then, reader—your imagination, not like mine, may keep pace with our author's—figure yourself as a single sentient being in a non-sentient universe, and tell us, would you not believe in 'a real end of Reason, the absolutely Good or Desirable?' Would you not say, I can reach my end; there *is* something I *ought* to live for, and that is my pleasure?

The reader must answer the question, for I confess my fancy is too weak to realize the position. So far as I can do so, I answer it in the negative.

And now that we have put the Hedonistic end, let us look at the alternative, the true alternative, which involves no 'hypothesis unverifiable by experience.' But we must come to this through two one-sided statements of the issue:—

(i) Let us first understand by the 'objective' end something out of relation to the mind. Is this the end? I think we may say it is not.

(ii) Next let us suppose (I think this is what Mr. Sidgwick means) certain relations of our wills to other wills, or more generally, certain relations of our minds to something not

[1] Notice on p. 374 the wavering view of the reasonable, according to which one's 'own happiness seems to be a rational ultimate end.' This will meet us again.

our minds (371, 375), and this in entire abstraction from pleasure. Let us distinguish these 'in reflective analysis' from all feeling, and ask, Is function, apart from pleasure, a human end?

Elsewhere I said Yes to this question. I think that was rash. I can say neither Yes nor No, for I am sure now that I cannot perform the analysis required so as to bring the residuum before me practically. When I try to think what I should be like without pleasure or pain, I can find no certain result. Abstracting from these, I find the relation of my will to the universal will to be so unreal an abstraction that the words mean nothing at all, or, at least, nothing practical. I must leave the reader to answer the question for himself; and, so far as my views are concerned, he is most welcome to answer it in the negative[1].

[1] In Mind (V. 36) Mr. Sidgwick says, 'He (the Hedonist) is only concerned to maintain that, when in a mood of calm reflection we distinguish these ideal objects (such as the pursuit of truth, &c.) from the feelings inseparably connected with them, it is the quality of these latter which we see to be the ultimate end of rational desire.' The passage illustrates well our author's loose terminology. It is much the same statement as we quoted on p. 27 from Methods 371–2. There we had 'consciousness,' and here 'quality of feelings.' I will try to define the issue.

(1) Does Mr. Sidgwick mean by *quality of feelings* the mere pleasantness of them, entirely distinct from every other quality they possess? If not, his conclusion disappears.

(2) Does he mean that in the pursuit of truth, &c., we can distinguish, first the feelings from the activities, and then, next, the pleasantness of the feelings from their other qualities, and bring these things severally before our minds as distinct objects of choice? If not, once more his conclusion vanishes.

For that conclusion it is necessary that, taking the idea (e.g.) of the pursuit of truth, I should be able to separate in my mind, first, the feelings from the activities, and, next, the bare pleasantness of the feelings from every other quality they have, in such a way as to be able to contemplate, as several objects, first this mere pleasantness, and then the residue of feeling and activity; and to be able to say the element of pleasantness is the one end, and all the rest is not an end at all, nor goes to make the end an end, but is a bare means or accompaniment.

I do not believe that any one can perform this operation: and for myself, so far as I can make any approach to such a choice, it does not appear to me that the pleasantness, in its abstraction, is even *an* end. Still less does it appear that it is *the* end, and that all the rest of the feeling and activity is a bare accompaniment or means. But the reader must judge for himself.

The alleged fact that we can compare all pleasant things in respect of the

But there is another way of putting it which I think *is* intelligible. Given maintenance or heightening of function on one side with the same or less pleasure: given on the other side lowering of function in qualitative excellence (I have said elsewhere what I mean by these words) with the same or more pleasure—which is your end? not, Which would you like best, but Which *ought* you to take? Given even (for argument's sake) the possibility or certainty that what we call progress might entail, not mere loss of pleasure, but actually a less amount of pleasure than pain to the creation or to humanity—which is the *right* course? Hedonism tells us (this follows from p. 384) that progress is here an absolute evil, because the surplus counts and the surplus is pain. The issue, I think, is fair and tolerably intelligible, and I will leave it to the reader. Hedonism falls if the question is answered in the way I answer it[1].

(iii) But I deny the right of any one to compel us to such a choice, unless he first proves against us what Mr. Sidgwick does not attempt to prove, nor even asserts. We do not separate 'objective' and 'subjective:' we do not say, Virtue *or* pleasure, and Pleasure *or* virtue: we say *both*. The true issue is virtue + pleasure as the end, against mere pleasure as the end. To say, Function is the end, is by no means to say, Pleasure is not good. It is to say, Pleasure is an inseparable element in the human end, and in that sense is necessarily included in the end; and higher life implies pleasure for the reason that life without pleasure is inconceivable. What we hold to against every possible modification of Hedonism is that the standard and test is in higher and lower function, not in more or less pleasure. *If* any one can prove that higher life means less or no surplus of pleasure, *then* he can fairly ask us to face the alternative. We are

amount of their pleasantness, does not show (as Mr. Sidgwick to seems think it does) that we can put bare pleasantness on one side, and everything else on the other, and, bringing these as several objects before the mind, make our choice between them. And besides, the alleged fact is contrary to experience (see above, p. 18).

[1] In the passage quoted from Mind, V. 36, Mr. Sidgwick appears to deny this; but I may not understand him rightly.

ready to do this, but against Mr. Sidgwick we certainly need not do so unless we please.

I have been forced to repeat a good deal of that which I have said elsewhere: it would be little more than a similar repetition did I enter on the remaining difficulties of the chapter; and as Mr. Sidgwick (in his article on Hedonism, Mind, V.) brought forward nothing against the doctrine I advanced, I must consider that it stands. The result of this section, in my judgment, is, that our author has not shown the greatest surplus of pleasure to be *the* end, nor even an end at all.

### § 6.—*Unconscious Hedonism.*

The latter part of the foregoing section has, I think, removed by anticipation the argument from the latent or unconscious Hedonism of common morality. Indeed, as an independent proof this seems to have no weight at all. To go through the virtues and to show that they all bring pleasure establishes the thesis, Virtue in general is pleasant, and it establishes no more. To conclude from Virtue is pleasant, to Pleasure is the end and virtue merely the means, is surely a logical leap of some width. If you could show (and Mr. Sidgwick has not done so) that the greatest surplus of pleasure comes from what we call virtue, i.e. that no other way of life we call not-virtuous could have produced a greater, even then you have not proved one step towards the Hedonistic thesis. The argument may hold against asceticism; that is for the ascetic to dispute. Against us it does not hold. If the end is the fullest life for each with the most harmonious life for all, the most harmonious life for each with the fullest life for all, it is not very hard to see why virtue should in general be pleasant, nor need it stagger us to be told (though neither we nor Mr. Sidgwick affirm this) that what we call the most virtuous life is, when the whole is considered, also the most pleasant. I am unable to see how, if this is so, it goes to show either that one element of the whole is the end and the other nothing but a means,

or even that the element of pleasure is to be used as the criterion for the element of virtue. The reason for placing the criterion in function rather than pleasure (even on the hypothesis that greatest pleasure must coincide on the whole with highest function) is that the function is definite and the pleasure indefinite. I have stated these points elsewhere, and Mr. Sidgwick has advanced nothing against them.

## § 7.—*The Suppression of Egoism.*

We come now to one of the most characteristic parts of the Methods of Ethics. It is always interesting to study the position of the Hedonist towards Egoism, particularly to those who, like myself, feel sure that consistent Hedonism must be egoistic. We will first see what Mr. Sidgwick's attitude towards Egoism is, and then try to understand the reason of it.

Our author's Egoist is the man who pursues the maximum of his own pleasure; and since, as we have seen, right and wrong are 'objective,' and reason apprehends the universal, it is natural to think that for Mr. Sidgwick it would have been plain at once that egoism and morality are irreconcileable, and that to show this by 'argument' was not only superfluous but impossible.

No doubt there is a method of arguing with the Egoist in the sense of the man who takes his self for his end. Argument is possible as to the nature of the self; and the Egoist may be convinced perhaps that he has made a mistake. But in Mr. Sidgwick we find no hint of the kind, and indeed anything of the sort would be for him, I suppose, an 'hypothesis unverifiable by experience.'

Failing this, I should have said the only course left was to call attention to the immorality and 'irrationality' of Egoism, and so leave it. Mr. Sidgwick does not do this: he approaches the Egoist with 'argument' (391, 392, note) or 'proof' (461). And in this 'argument,' which I have done my best to understand, I can see no more than one or two tautologies.

We have first two 'self-evident truths,' of which each seems to be 'an indubitable intuition of the practical Reason' (371; cf. 470). These are the Rule of Equity and the Rule of Benevolence.

The first is '"Whatever I judge reasonable or unreasonable that another should do for me: that by the same judgment I declare reasonable or unreasonable that I should *in the like case* do for him"' (358).

With all due respect for our author's opinion, this Rule seems to me to be a pure tautology. The right, the objective, the reasonable, is, by the definition, what holds in abstraction from 'the mere fact that I and he are different individuals' (358), or 'the mere individuality of different individuals' (183, note), or again 'the mere fact that *he is he*' (391). The meaning of 'reasonable' is what holds in abstraction from the individual, and hence is the same in all individuals. If we really wish to be 'reasonable' we must write X for 'me' and 'him,' these being unreasonable distinctions, and then the Rule is, Whatever X judges reasonable or unreasonable that X should do for X: that by the same judgment X declares reasonable or unreasonable that X should *in the like case* do for X. That, as soon as we know that reasonable = universal, is surely a bare tautology.

The second Rule, without any doubt 'an indubitable intuition of the practical Reason' (371; cf. 468, 470, 472), is the Rule of Benevolence.

'Here we are supposed to judge that there is something intrinsically desirable—some result which it would be reasonable for each individual to seek for himself if he considered himself alone. Let us call this the individual's Good or Welfare: then what Clarke urges is, that the Good of any one individual cannot be *more* intrinsically desirable, *because it is his*, than the equal Good of any other individual.' (360.)

'I cannot regard the fulfilment of my desires, or my own happiness, as intrinsically more desirable (or more to be regarded by me as a rational end) than the equal happiness of any one else.' (364.)

Mr. Sidgwick proceeds:

'But now, of these two propositions, the first is a necessary postulate of *all* ethical systems, being an expression of what is involved in the mere conception of objective rightness and wrongness of conduct, while the second is the fundamental principle of that particular system which (in Book I.) we called Utilitarianism.'

The first of these propositions, I remark, is not an expression of what is involved but of what is explicitly stated in 'objective rightness;' and here again in the second the phrases 'desirable' and 'rational end' postulate abstraction from 'the individuality of the individual.' In respect of the rules we have no right to distinguish one individual from another, and this second proposition comes to no more than 'X cannot regard his own happiness as more desirable than the equal happiness of X,' which seems to me either tautological or nonsensical[1].

As Mr. Sidgwick says, 'This seems to be as much a self-evident truth as the principle of Equity' (360). I agree with him in this point. My objection is that it is *self*-evident in the sense of having the self-same subject and predicate, and that, in short, in a different form it is the tautology we had before[2].

We think then that our author not only 'may seem to have laboriously executed one of those circles in reasoning before noticed' (366), but certainly has done so: and when he proceeds, 'We seem to have done nothing: and in fact we have only evolved the suppression of Egoism, the necessary universality of view, which is implied in the mere form of the objective judgment "that an end is good," just as it is in the

[1] In plain words, these rules are, What is good for X is good for X, and what is right for X is right for X. They cannot mean, What is good and right for *one* X is so for *another* and a *different* X. Right and good are the same for each, and each is the same for right and good. The 'difference' Mr. Sidgwick supposes to be constituted by 'individuality' falls outside the 'universal' and 'objective.' In saying 'reasonable' we postulate indifference to 'the individuality of the individuals,' and hence the words 'one' and 'other' are irrelevant. By introducing them you mean to add nothing to the universal at all, or, if you do, you flatly contradict our author's view of 'objective rightness.'

[2] It ceases to be a tautology only if it postulates absolutely that pleasure is *an* end or *the* end. Then it becomes a mere assumption and, if any argument is meant, a glaring *petitio*. But I do not understand Mr. Sidgwick to put it forward in the above sense.

judgment "that an action is right"'—it is impossible for us not to answer, You really have done nothing, and have 'evolved' nothing but that which long ago you explicitly postulated.

So far our only way with the Egoist has been to reiterate the postulates which he denies, and if the argument is to proceed we must do more. We must make him accept them, and on paper it is but to ask and to have. The Egoistic Hedonist, who holds that absolutely nothing but his subjective pleasure is the end, advances 'the proposition that his happiness or pleasure is objectively desirable' (391), and having thus admitted that his own doctrine is false, naturally is at once confuted and ignominiously suppressed.

It is hard to discuss this matter with gravity. I will merely remark that the egoistic Hedonist who could admit the above proposition would show that he simply did not know what he was saying. 'Objectively desirable' means desirable *not* for me in particular, and the Hedonistic egoist is the man he is by holding that *nothing* is 'objectively desirable.'

He would laugh if you said to him of his happiness that 'the mere fact (if I may so put it) that *he is he* can have nothing to do with its objective desirability or goodness' (391). 'I pursue my pleasure, my dear Sir, not because I am I, nor for the sake of any other tautology, but because I feel it and like it, while yours I can neither feel nor like.' Would not this be his answer to our author's 'argument'? And Mr. Sidgwick fully admits that argument is here of no avail (391) [1].

[1] But even here he makes the Egoist say 'that he ought to take his own happiness or pleasure as his ultimate end.' This too is surely inaccurate. 'Ought' for Hedonistic egoism refers only to the means. Cf. Ethical Studies, p. 116. On the whole subject of Egoism, as treated by Mr. Sidgwick, I have failed to find a consistent view. He not only (374) allows that Egoism is reasonable, but on p. 391, when he formulates the Egoistic first principle in two ways, and says that against the second the 'proof' holds, while against the first (as just quoted) it does not, I cannot see the vital distinction. If 'ought'='reasonable' (80, note), and 'right'='reasonable,' and is 'the same, whether recognised or not, for all Minds or Subjects' (182), surely the moment the Egoist says he *ought* to take the end he does, he contradicts himself, and

But let us turn to the more interesting question, what has led our author into this position against Egoistic Hedonism. The answer is in a word that Mr. Sidgwick dares not break entirely with this view for fear his own ground should give way beneath him. He not only, as we shall see hereafter, has doubts whether Egoism be not 'reasonable;' but, if his own thesis is to stand, it is of the last importance that Egoistic Hedonism should *not* be suppressed wholly. His tactics (I use the word in no offensive sense) are, standing on Egoistic Hedonism to universalize that into Utilitarianism. Of *my pleasure* he wants to keep one part (pleasure) and drop only the *my*. And to do this the Egoist must be won over—hence the 'argument.' But even if the Egoist become an ally, I think this movement cannot be executed in the face of an enemy. What it comes to is, as I have said elsewhere, Take from Egoistic Hedonism pleasure as the end, take from morality the 'universal' and the 'reasonable,' and then argue, *My* pleasure is not a reasonable end, pleasure in general is not mine, therefore pleasure in general is a reasonable end. This of course is futile; and the only way left to separate the 'my' from 'pleasure' is to postulate in a single sentient an intuition of my pleasure as pleasure in general, which seems to be an untenable position (I cannot say if it is our author's). It naturally leads to the doctrine that the 'my' and 'your' are an illusion, and that mine when viewed under the light of reason is the same as yours[1]. This result (substantially

the proof holds just as much as when he says 'his happiness or pleasure is objectively desirable or good.' Where is the difference?

[1] The reader will find it instructive here to develope a doctrine of non-hedonistic Egoism. Suppose the law of the universe by which it progresses to be the struggle for existence, the reckless self-assertion of each against all. Suppose that the individuals are aware of this law, then is it not both the 'objective' and 'subjective' end of the individual to assert himself against all to the uttermost? By making himself his sole end, is he not fulfilling the objective end, the intrinsically desirable, &c.? Against this position (not mine) what form would Mr. Sidgwick's 'reasonable' take? The fact that I am I, if I have most force, is a vital difference to the end of the universe, and to get that end by getting the strongest to the front, there is (ex hypoth.) but one course, that we should struggle recklessly. I do not know whether any enthusiastic follower of Mr. Darwin has clearly developed this view. It is much to be wished that some one would. If the reader will carry it out for

the same as Schopenhauer's) could I think be deduced from our author's doctrine of the 'reasonable,' but, apart from the objections we entertain to the premises, the strict result would seem to be that not only the differences of 'you' and 'me' are illusory because irrational, but that also, and on the same ground, pain and pleasure are both illusions.

In our last section we shall come once more upon Egoism, but now we must turn to Mr. Sidgwick's view of Ethical Science, which seems vitally connected with his doctrine of Reason.

## Part III.

### § 8.—*Mr. Sidgwick's view of Ethical Science.*

Ethical science does not yet exist; but it is possible. What is its nature? The end we know. The study of the means to the end is Eudemonics. This plus 'the acceptance of the end as absolutely prescribed' is Ethics (8). It treats of the ideal to be realized and the actions which are to realize it. Hence 'its affirmations are also precepts' (2, 3).

'The science of Ethics, therefore, necessarily treats of action which to a great extent is not: action therefore which (we may say) *ought* to be[1]. Its affirmations are also precepts: indeed, if it were not so, the distinction just drawn between Ethics and Psychology would vanish.' (3.)

The end, as was said before, we know. The means are the actions of men.

The object or scope of the 'science' is practical. It is to direct us to 'externally and objectively right' conduct (381). It is to tell us what to do, not merely in general, but in particular. It is to be no mere outline but a scientific code.

'For instinct varies and is uncertain, and sometimes gives no clear guidance at all: and yet we are convinced that the right

himself and bring it into collision with our author's 'argument' against Egoism, I think he will find that it throws light on the subject.

[1] We have already noticed that this view of 'ought' is open to serious criticism. A minor point would be the question whether 'science' is the proper term to use.

course must be the same for all, and ought to be determined upon universal principles; and it is for these that men appeal to the moralist.' (217.)

'Its aim is rather to shew a natural transition from the Morality of Common Sense to Utilitarianism, somewhat like the transition in special branches of practice from trained instinct and empirical rules to the technical method that embodies and applies the conclusions of science: so that Utilitarianism may appear only as the scientifically complete and systematically reflective form of that regulation of conduct, which through the whole course of human history has always tended in the same direction' (396) 'In the more technical parts of practice we prefer the judgment of a few trained experts to the instincts of the vulgar.' (434.)

In one word we are to have a system of Casuistry.

'For if the particular can be satisfactorily settled by conscience without reference to general rules, "Casuistry," which consists in the application of general rules to particular cases, is clearly superfluous. But then, on this view, we shall have no practical need of any such general rules, or of a science of Ethics at all' (85; cf 295, *sub fin.*). And 'we study Ethics . . . for the sake of Practice.' (191.)

May the rules of this system collide? Certainly not.

'In order to have a complete theory of Ethics, we require not only to make our maxims perfectly precise, but also to systematize them completely, in order that no collision of precepts may remain possible.' (200.) 'Such a collision is absolute proof that at least one of the formulae needs qualification.' (320.) 'In conclusion, then, we must admit that while we find a number of broad and more or less indefinite rules unhesitatingly laid down by Common Sense in this department of duty; it is difficult or impossible to state even the most certain of these with such clearness and precision as would enable us to determine exactly the extent of duty in any case. And yet, as we saw, such exactness seems to be required for the perfection of practice no less than for theoretical completeness, in so far as those duties are liable to come into apparent conflict with each other, and with other prescriptions of the moral code.' (235, cf. 388.)

For an act to be right we see it must come under one head or clause of the code, and that this cannot be at variance with any other.

'One may hold that duty varies with the individual and is so far relative, and yet maintain that it varies on rational grounds, capable of being explained, systematized, and reduced to principles.' (6; cf. 377 *sub fin.*)

Briefly then we see Mr. Sidgwick's conception of Ethics is wholly jural.

It is at this point that an interesting question, the relation of morality to law, is opened. My knowledge of the subject, I am sorry to say, even did space permit, would not enable me to enter on it. I do not know how far, as a matter of fact, any code of law can be made so systematic as not to contradict itself. But there are two obvious points which present themselves here. First, no modern code makes the smallest attempt to regulate our whole life in accordance with a leading principle. And secondly, a most important point, all law abstracts and must abstract, while morality may not do so. In morals we take a case and we ask, Is this morally right or wrong and how far? Here we can refuse to consider no single item of the whole complication. The previous life of the man, his difference from other men, the combination of circumstances in its general character and then in its relation to *this* man, all have to be admitted in a moral judgment. You cannot say 'such and such an act is wrong, and wrong to such an extent,' and then bring the man under the law as such and such a case of criminality. But, on the other hand, is not law obliged to do this? Is it not from its very nature compelled to keep to the 'universal' and to treat the whole case as an abstraction, i. e. as a *mere* instance of the law, which the case really *never* is. Is not the best administered and best law possible compelled either to leave such liberty to the administrator that practically it ceases to be law, or else obliged seldom quite to coincide with morality, and too often to come into a collision with it, which, though unavoidable, is none the less painful[1]? I submit these questions to the judgment of

[1] I do not mean that Law can never try to judge the whole case morally; but I think I am right in supposing that it does not do so except in considering the amount of punishment, and again of damages in civil (are they really civil?) actions of a certain sort.

the reader, and if we are obliged to answer them in the affirmative, then I would put one more question, Does not this nature of law raise a strong presumption against the jural view of Ethics?

Turning now to the question of a moral code we see an alternative awaits us. Either you are prepared to give up your code at a certain point, or else you must attempt to get every possible complication within its clauses.

To accept the former is to throw the code over. Ethics is no longer 'a complete method for determining right conduct' (217). Our judgment is no more 'a systematic deduction from rules' (85). And even then we are left with the question, Do not the rules collide? The opinion which I have put forward elsewhere is that they both do and must.

But I understand our author to accept the second proposition. All complications, I understand him to say, are to be anticipated in the code, or at least so provided for there that the act will come without collision under some one head[1].

What we are going to try to show is that this attempt to get every qualification inside the code leaves in the end *nothing* outside, so that the objective criterion becomes merely subjective, and will justify *any* action whatever. In short, just as in metaphysic we see abstract individualism and abstract universalism turn round the one into the other, just as in Kant's Practical Philosophy the categorical imperative covered in the end anything or nothing, so in our author's Hedonistic casuistry we shall find that 'objective rightness,' just because he has made it *so* objective, becomes in fact merely subjective. It is an old story that extremes meet, and Mr. Sidgwick has illustrated it once more.

'One may hold that duty varies with the individual and is so

[1] The teaching that we should act sometimes on impulse, the 'self-limiting' power of Reason (323–4), together with what is said as to tact (202, cf. 206), merely means, I think, that we in our practice may find the clause best sometimes by not thinking of it. That the *moralist* not only may, but must, draw his code so as to exhibit every right act as a deduction from it, will be seen from the passages quoted and referred to above to be Mr. Sidgwick's doctrine.

far relative, and yet maintain that it varies on rational grounds, capable of being explained, systematized, and reduced to principles. So much relativity, indeed, is admitted to some extent in all moral systems. But if it be maintained that two men may act in two different ways under circumstances precisely similar, and yet neither be wrong because each thinks himself right: then the common notion of morality must be rejected as a chimera. That there is in any given circumstances some one thing which ought to be done and that this can be known, is a fundamental assumption, made not by philosophers only, but by all men who perform any processes of moral reasoning.' (6.)

That there is some *one* thing right is false, if ever in any circumstances there can be two courses *either* of which is right. Certainly common opinion holds that this is possible, and how on Mr. Sidgwick's view it is impossible that two courses might equally conduce to the greatest surplus I cannot see. But if this is so, then the proposition 'that two men' &c. must be reconsidered.

This is not perhaps an important point, but it is as well not to set down at the beginning an inaccurate statement as a 'fundamental assumption.'

To proceed, at all events 'Right and Wrong are really objective: that is, the same, whether recognised or not, for all Minds or Subjects' (182–3). But what does this mean? That what is right for you must be right for me? No.

'If then I assert any action to be right, I imply that it would be right for any other person in my circumstances: or (for obviously that the circumstances are *my* circumstances cannot make it right) for all persons in precisely similar circumstances.' (183.)

This sounds well; and, hearing further 'that the rightness at any rate of most actions is altered by a *material* alteration of circumstances,' we naturally now want to know what circumstances may be 'material.' Some of these we shall see hereafter, but we find a decided answer to the general question in the note to the above page.

'It should be observed that difference of circumstances must be taken to include difference of nature and character—in short all differences beyond the mere individuality of different individuals.'

So much is certain. But what is 'the mere individuality of different individuals?' Ah, that is the sort of question no modest enquirer tries to answer. We keep to experience, and use these categories so far as for his practical purposes every one must. To ask what they mean, what *we* mean when we use them, would it not be to discuss 'hypotheses unverifiable by experience?' Indeed, in too many cases I think so; or shall we say, not 'unverifiable by experience,' but there most verifiable as the fictions of a onesided theory?

We must take it, I suppose, that this 'mere individuality' is what you have left after you have got a variety of men and abstracted all the differences of nature and character. The residue of myself, after my nature and character are removed, is my individuality.

Let us take it so. But then the result which *must* follow is that everything beside this residuum is objective. The circumstances of nature and character will *not* be '*my* circumstances.' They will be material to and will qualify rightness, and rightness is objective. The act is right because it is an instance deducible from the code. We have seen the extent of the circumstances which may enter into the act, and it is now obvious that *either* we must give up the idea of deciding right and wrong systematically from a code, *or* we must provide in the code for all these complications, not only for all combinations of outward events, but also for the differences of nature and character. Otherwise we shall have only a 'subjective criterion.'

It is much to be wished that Mr. Sidgwick would express himself more definitely on this point. As it is, I cannot understand him to do anything but accept the second proposition. Let us proceed, however, to the practical application of the code[1].

'We must observe that the admission of an exception on general grounds is merely the establishment of a more complex and delicate rule, instead of one that is broader and simpler: for if it is

[1] I must earnestly beg the reader to go through the whole chapter, Bk. iv. c. 5, not only to check me, but to convince himself.

conducive to the general good that the exception be admitted in one case, it will be equally so in all similar cases.' (448.)

We see so far that 'exceptions on general grounds' are allowable, since they are not really exceptions at all, but additions to the code. How simple and how workable that code will be the reader may stop to consider. Or rather let him wait until he has read the following:—

'There is, however, another kind of exceptions, differing fundamentally from this, which Utilitarianism seems to admit: where the agent does not think it expedient that the rule on which he himself acts should be *universally* adopted, and yet maintains that his individual act is right, as producing a greater balance of pleasure over pain than any other conduct open to him would produce.' (449.)

Here most persons would have thought is an end of the code altogether. But no,—

'Here, however, we seem brought into conflict with Kant's fundamental principle, that a right action must be one which the agent could desire to be done by all persons under similar circumstances: and yet it was argued (Book iii. c. 1, and c. 13), that this was a necessary truth involved in the very idea of right conduct. And it certainly seems to me such: only (as was noticed in Book iii. c. 7, in the particular case of veracity,) we must admit a qualification of this rule, which importantly modifies its practical application: we must include among relevant "circumstances" the belief (supposing it to exist) that the action will not be widely imitated. In short, the Kantian principle means no more than that no act can be right for me "because I am I:" if right for me, it must be right on general grounds and therefore for some class of persons: but there is no reason why this class should not be defined by the above-mentioned characteristic of believing that the act will remain an exceptional one.' (450.)

We are not surprised after this to find that—

'The Romanist view of the economy to be observed in the distribution of truth, seems to be strictly in harmony with Utilitarian principles.' (452.)

And, to continue the quotation:—

'So again, in so far as the harm of an act consists chiefly in its bad example, it may on Utilitarian principles be right if it can be done with perfect secresy, but not otherwise. On both these points Utilitarianism is manifestly at issue with Common Sense: for the very notion of the latter involves the repudiation of an esoteric morality, differing from that popularly taught: and an action which would be bad if done openly is not commonly thought to be rendered good by secresy.' (*ibid.*)

'Thus the Utilitarian conclusion, carefully stated, would seem to be this: that the opinion that secresy may render an action right which would not otherwise be so, should itself be kept comparatively secret: and similarly it seems expedient that the doctrine that esoteric morality is expedient should itself be kept esoteric.' (452–3.)

I suppose all this is to be inserted in the code, and at this point I will put it to the reader whether what it comes to is not in plain language this, that taking the greatest surplus of pleasure to the creation as the end, you may and ought to use your private judgment as to the means: that *any* act, no matter how seemingly immoral, is moral for you if you have a sincere opinion that it will increase the surplus. I will use no illustrations to help the reader to understand this doctrine; but I will venture so far as to ask him to make them for himself.

All that is left of the 'system of objective rules' is this. Having judged an act to be the means to the greatest pleasure, you add to your judgment the superfluous, if not senseless, formula, And if any one else were I, it would be right for him to judge and act as I do. Then you may call the act Right and Duty, or (perhaps) even more than Duty (456). If this is so, and follows necessarily from Mr. Sidgwick's teaching, then it may be no more than an idle fancy that once and again has made us think of the Probable Opinion; it may be wholly unfair to see the doctrine that the moralist tells men what they ought to think (352), and that Ethics is practical Casuistry, take the practical form of the Spiritual Director; but I think it is fair to say that Utilitarianism when carried out comes to something not unlike Jesuitry.

I have no reason to suppose Mr. Sidgwick to be more friendly to that cause than I am. But what he teaches, and what must follow from his teaching, we must take on its own merits. And at this point he may say he is treated unfairly, that these casuistical doctrines are valid only in the present transitory stage, where the morality of 'common sense' still lingers, and where the moralist has not yet (with the assistance of the sociologist) succeeded in constructing the full code. But I do not think this is what he means. Let us go on to the next paragraph.

'Of course in an ideal community of enlightened Utilitarians this swarm of puzzles and paradoxes would vanish: as in such a society no one can have any ground for believing that persons in circumstances similar to his own will act in a manner different to that which he adopts.' (453.)

Now I think we have a right to suppose that our author must maintain one of these two things. *Either* he holds that a time is coming, or may come, when the means leading to the maximum of pleasure will have been systematized with all the above qualifications in one harmonious code, and further believes that the community will be so enlightened as not merely to have mastered this code, but to be able by private judgment to bring each action under the fitting clause—*or* he does not affirm this, but thinks that the relative distinction of the 'enlightened' and 'the vulgar' may or must continue.

If he accepts the first alternative I withdraw my objections. But I shall leave it to the reader to judge whether argument is any longer possible; whether we are not in the realm of fiction and apocalyptic literature; whether, after having emptied the contents of each human being into this monstrous code, Mr. Sidgwick has not been forced to postulate something like omniscience in 'the individuality of the individuals' which is left to execute it.

But if he accepts the second then does not all that I have urged hold good? When we look things in the face, is it not moral for any one, who likes to call himself a moralist, to use and act on his private judgment as to the means which

will produce the maximum of pleasure in any and every case in which he chooses to do so? And has not so far the result proved mere individualism, and the objective criterion turned out 'subjective?'

'Ah but,' I may hear, 'Mr. Sidgwick distinguishes objective and subjective Rightness. Have you forgotten that?' Indeed I almost had. But let us see what 'objective rightness' means.

'By Utilitarianism is here meant the ethical theory, first distinctly formulated by Bentham, that the conduct which under any given circumstances is externally or objectively right, is that which will produce the greatest amount of happiness to all whose interests are affected.' (381.)

The end is the maximum surplus. The means are the actions and rules which necessarily lead to that end, according to Mr. Sidgwick in *one* way, but for argument's sake let us say in one or more possible ways. In any given circumstances there is one course of conduct (or several courses) which are externally and objectively right. And now I ask, How can this course be known? The science of Ethics does not exist; what can take its place? The science of Ethics, I make bold to say, while man is man *can* never exist. Even if the world never altered, to have a complete knowledge of the laws of life, and to be able to judge correctly the enormous complication of detail so as to say, This act will increase the surplus and that act will not—goes beyond the human knowledge that we find in experience. And if the world alters, then the idea of knowing beforehand the laws of that alteration and of calculating existing data accordingly, is the mere dream of a doctrinaire which omniscience alone could make real.

'That there is in any given circumstances some one thing which ought to be done, and that this can be known, is a fundamental assumption' (6). But if that thing be 'objective rightness' it cannot be known. To say of past conduct, This *was* objectively right, is to say, No other course would have produced more pleasure on the whole. To say of present conduct, This *is* objectively right, is to say no other course

will produce a greater surplus of pleasure to humanity or the creation. Such knowledge seems to me so plainly beyond the reach of our minds that I think it is not worth while to dwell on the point. Once more I must leave it to the reader.

But if such knowledge is, I will not say too high for us, but clearly impossible, then 'objective rightness' *is* what we *think* objective, and we are left with 'subjective rightness.' And, in the teeth of his own doctrine, Mr. Sidgwick *himself accepts this conclusion.*

'Thus upon any theory of Ethics we require to distinguish *real* from *believed*, or as is now more commonly said "objective" from "subjective" rightness. Indeed this distinction sometimes involves us in a practical perplexity, not as regards our own conduct (for we obviously cannot distinguish what we believe to be right from what really is so) but in arguing with others.' (182.)

'For a Utilitarian must hold that it is always wrong and irrational for a man to do anything else than what he believes most conducive to Universal Happiness, and it is not possible for him to do more.' (456.)

The difference in the end is between what *we* think right and what others think it, and, on our author's view, what is that more than a 'subjective criterion?' 'But no subjective criterion of duty, however important it may be, can help us to construct a system of objective rules of conduct' (184).

This is what we wanted to show, that a one-sided view has proved fatal to itself, that the attempt to make right 'objective' in abstraction from the individual, has issued in the confession that right is 'subjective,' and individual judgment the practical criterion.

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And now a word in conclusion. The reader may say, Then *is* not right merely subjective, and is not that contrary to the moral consciousness? I think it is contrary, but it is not my doctrine. For me, though right is subjective, it is none the less objective; but rather it is one just so far as it is the other. It is *both*, not in the sense that this or that man or

set of men, as such, *make* it, nor in the sense that what *is* objectively right is simply taken up by the subjective side, and so *becomes* also (formally) subjective, but that right is a whole which is determined by both elements, and apart from either is not itself. I cannot further explain this here.

And again if I am asked, But does not the doctrine you hold admit of collisions of duties and exceptions to rules, and is not that Jesuitry? Would it not in fact be pernicious in practice?—my answer is very simple, that for me Ethics is not practical, but is a purely speculative science. I do not for one moment wish to blink the fact that in my opinion Ethics must teach that whereby the moral consciousness may be offended, and I have never attempted to blink it (see Eth. Stud. 143). *But* a practical collision between Ethics and morality is for me a sheer impossibility, because the former has nothing whatever to do with practice. The question for me is solely, 'Is moral science *true?* Has it or has it not succeeded in understanding the *facts* of morality?'

The truth or falsehood of this science are not to be decided by a direct appeal to the moral consciousness. This is supreme in its own sphere, as the experience which gives facts, but it cannot leave that sphere without altering its nature and losing its authority. Theory stands and falls by the theoretical test alone, i. e. its agreement with the facts and with itself. It is to start from and be verified in experience, but it is *not* mere experience. It is reflection and interpretation; and when mere experience pronounces on the abstract conclusions of science, then it ceases to be experience and, becoming theory, must itself stand and fall by the theoretical test.

But when science ceases to understand, and proposes to alter the facts, then common experience has a right to be heard, and the more loudly it speaks the better for all parties. For Mr. Sidgwick moral science is practical Casuistry which, if it does *not* alter the facts of life, has no title to existence. And here in my opinion the province of non-theoretical morality is invaded, and it has a right to speak. Science (to repeat it) is absolutely free while it is theory, while it keeps

to the ὄν, and what is called 'common sense' is simply out of court. But when it becomes art, and applies itself to γενέσιν, then it must answer for itself and not fall back on the privileges of theory. Thus in morals against a theoretical dissection or construction of morality, however abhorrent to our feelings, we can properly claim no right but that of scientific discussion; but against any practical proposal we have a right to speak as practical moral agents.

I hope the reader will not go away with the idea that I wish to represent our author as a revolutionary character, or his book as 'dangerous for young persons.' I do not suppose there is any serious or, I might say, any difference of opinion between us as to what in particular is right and wrong, for we both substantially accept the doctrines of ordinary morality. The difference is one of principle, not detail. I object not to the things he teaches us to do, but to the spirit and the way in which he teaches us to do them. It is not the particular conclusions of his Casuistry, but the whole principle of it, that seems to me both false in theory and corrupt in practice.

And if we consider not our author himself but his main doctrine, we must say more. Deduced by a man of practical good sense, the conclusions of the hedonistic Art of Life would never seriously conflict with common morality. There are good psychological reasons for that. But once admit the principle, and what is to happen if men with no sense nor hold on real life, but gifted with a logical faculty, begin systematically to deduce from this slippery principle? Is this not a danger, and is it a wholly imaginary danger?

## § 9.—*The Final Difficulty.*

'And yet we cannot but admit . . . that it is ultimately reasonable to seek one's own happiness' (473). I confess that, prepared as I was by a passage on p. 374, and though I saw that our author was but half-hearted in his attitude towards Egoism, I did not expect this. Here it is, however, and there

can be no doubt about it. But 'whatever I judge to be Good, I cannot reasonably think that it is abstractly and primarily right that I should have it more than another' (366). 'In fact I have defined "reason" so that "reasonable" conduct must mean "right" or what "ought to be done"' (29), and right is 'the same for all minds or subjects' (182). This again has been the constant theme, and the nerve of the main argument. How did we suppress the egoist but by this? And now why did we knock down the egoist at all if we meant to set him up again? I must suppose that Mr. Sidgwick holds that 'reason' gives us two contradictory reports; and having used one throughout his book[1] he now brings forward the other. The previous argument then rests on a thesis the contradictory of which is no less true. If that is so, it may perhaps not be presumptuous to suggest that we might have been clearly informed of it before. It looks very much as if our author, after all his efforts, finds the egoistic position too strong for him, and is willing, if only it can be accomplished, to avoid the 'conflict between the two kinds of reasonableness' (374) by subordinating everything to the selfish end. The reader must judge whether, if this is so, a large and important part of the work must not be seriously modified, and whether at last 'practical reason' means anything at all.

Well, so much seems pretty clear, that it is reasonable to seek *both* one's own maximum pleasure *and* that of the creation; and the problem is to satisfy both desires at once. The question seems not so much about what ought to be as about the consistency of the Practical Reason (470–1). If the Good (sc. pleasure) of the individual is not ultimately identified with Universal Good (sc. pleasure), then the universe (471) is fundamentally irrational and morally chaotic.

In other words, it is 'a matter of life and death to the Practical Reason' (371) to show that the only true selfishness is morality, and morality the one best selfish policy.

The solution of the contradiction, which brings order out

[1] There is an exception on p. 473. Cf. supra, p. 7, note, and p. 36, note.

of chaos, is that certain quantities of pleasure and pain should be attached to individuals, that they should be adequately rewarded for obeying the rule of duty and punished for violating it (470).

The difficulty is as to how this attachment of pleasure and pain is to be effected. Humanity, we find, cannot wholly carry out the task, and hence something external to humanity is required. What remains then? Surely, surely it is our old friend the *Deus ex machina*[1], and anxiously we sit awaiting him: the crisis is at hand, the actors at a dead lock and we on the stretch. Vain expectation, for the days of Paley are gone by. The machine is grown old, and the God will not come to the front, and the stage is in confusion, and the curtain falls hurriedly in the middle of the fifth act.

As to the moral and religious character of Mr. Sidgwick's doctrine I have said what I thought necessary elsewhere. What I think he should make plainer is whether he thinks the above hypothesis removes evil from the universe; how this is possible while human beings remain on the one hand so stupid, and on the other hand so impulsive; and, supposing moral evil is not removed, whether 'Practical Reason' is satisfied with that. Next, what does he mean by *adequate* reward and what does he mean by punishment? Is the pain merely to be threatened? Will that serve? Surely we are much too stupid. Is it to be inflicted? Why? What good does that do? Is not that *immoral?* And what reward is adequate? We know what coin the 'Wages of Virtue' are to be paid in, but the amount surely matters, and the rules of payment for work; for may we not after all be dealt with unfairly? I do not know what our author's answer to these questions is, or whether he thinks they need an answer. I am of opinion that if hedonistic Moral Theology is to stand, they must be answered, and also that they cannot be answered.

[1] Mr. Sidgwick wishes to justify both selfishness and morality. The way to do it is to show that they are one thing from different points of view. He fails to effect any union from the internal nature of each, and so requires them to be brought together from the outside. That is a purely mechanical expedient.

And yet we cannot in fairness leave the matter here. We should wrong our author if we took him at his word, and judged him to mean no more than he says. His difficulty, we must believe, is other than he thinks it, and it is the old puzzle, How can morality be reconciled to the world?

The hardest form of the question, the problem of evil and the moral ought, is, I think, not what Mr. Sidgwick contemplates, nor again that of the general coincidence of happiness and virtue. What he has in his mind we take to be the familiar stumbling-block that in the world we know each man *is* not happy according as he is virtuous, and that he *ought* to be so because he deserves to be so. This is a knot which more than one philosopher has called on God and immortality to loose or to sever, and we think this was the real *dignus vindice nodus* with Mr. Sidgwick. It is indeed no matter to treat lightly, but a serious and difficult problem. I do not pretend to give a satisfactory solution, but, even though I overstep the limits of my undertaking, I will offer some remarks.

First of all, it is necessary to remember that in healing an evil there is a risk of 'healing it by another,' and that this is specially the case in a doctrine of rewards and punishments. Seeking to satisfy morality we may postulate that which itself is morally offensive, and I think this has certainly been done in some forms of the doctrine of rewards and punishments[1], though I am far from suggesting that it is so with all. But I am not going to enter on this point.

I think the simplest plan is to go to the moral consciousness and ask the question, Do I deserve a reward for doing my duty? Do I deserve punishment for moral offences? If punishment and reward are taken to consist in mere pain or pleasure attached to me from without, I cannot find that morality tells me I deserve *either*. But if they are taken to mean the lowering or heightening of my private life, then

[1] Here is a specimen. 'I shall therefore dismiss my reader with this maxim, viz., Our Happiness in this World proceeds from the Suppression of our Desires, but in the next World from the Gratification of them.' Spectator, No. 634.

I understand it to say that I do deserve punishment, but not that I deserve reward.

My bad will is what ought not to be, and the negation of that will is demanded, though mere feeling of pain is not. But the assertion of the good in me to the suppression of the bad entails lowering of my private existence, contradiction and pain. It may entail, *supposing* that to be the only way to assert the good, even my extinction, and so this may be demanded.

The heightening of my existence as *mine* I cannot see that morality does demand necessarily. Calling for the assertion of good in me it does call for the assertion of my existence. But I cannot find that it says to me, Your existence *ought* to be increased with increase of the good. On the other hand it does say, You must assert the good to the extinction of your existence, *if* that is the way to assert the good.

So much seems fairly clear: but then the real question is, I think, not, Does morality say this? but Does it not *also* say something more, and something perhaps not agreeing with this? Do we not feel when we see wickedness flourish and virtue in rags, This is not right, or good, or just? No doubt we do. And then must we not say that it is just or good or right that advantage should go with virtue, and disadvantage with vice, not merely on the whole but in each individual agent, and that a world, where it is not so, is not governed morally?

It would no doubt be possible, taking a position of extreme rigour, to call in the name of morality for the suppression of these sentiments: but that we feel would be a one-sided and unsatisfactory view of the case.

There can be no doubt that the demand for rewards as well as punishments rests on a true moral judgment ('instinct' or 'intuition' if you will). But I think it is a mistake to suppose that this demand is absolute. The error of the moral or theological doctrine we are discussing is, I think, first that it maintains in an unqualified manner that which is nowhere true apart from a higher truth, and secondly, that, by a false or uncertain analogy, it asserts the conditions of life as we

know them in human society to be valid beyond that society. But this is to anticipate the conclusion.

Let us ask then, Is it just that unequal happiness should go with equal virtue? The preliminary answer to that is, *If* there is a law which assigns advantage and disadvantage in proportion to virtue and vice, then you deserve both, and it is unjust if you do not have them [1].

This is not much more than a verbal answer, and I give it to call attention to the meaning of justice. The real question is not, Is it *just* that there should be a moral law for assigning advantage and disadvantage? for that, I think, has no meaning at all. It is, *Ought* advantage and disadvantage to be assigned? *Is* there an absolute moral law to that effect? And if so, does it not remain unexecuted? If you or I were the ruler of the universe, should we not think it *immoral* to govern it as it is governed? That is the real question. Should we not have a law to reward virtue and vice, and should we not act on it?

I think we make a mistake if we affirm this, and the mistake, as we said, consists partly in an unfounded analogy, and partly in an incomplete analogy. We take the analogy of human society, and then we emphasise one moral law which holds there, forgetting wholly the highest law. I will take the latter point first.

(1) If you or I were the ruler of a finite human community, should we feel morally bound always to assign disadvantage and advantage in proportion to moral evil and good? Should we feel bound always to reward virtue? I do not think so, but for the present let us say, Yes, we will

[1] I must ask leave here to correct a mistake I have made elsewhere (Eth. Stud. 191, note). I denied that getting one's deserts and getting justice were the same thing. Of course in real justice they are not the same, but then in ideal justice they are, and I cannot now understand how I failed to see this. In fact, one's desert is what is due to one by law: it is advantage or disadvantage necessarily connected with our acts by virtue of a law. The execution of such a law is justice, and hence 'what is just' and 'what I deserve' are two names of one thing. It follows that there is no desert where there is no law; and it follows again that *if* the highest moral law is *not* a law providing for the distribution of advantage and disadvantage, then the conceptions of justice and desert are inapplicable there and must be overruled.

reward virtue and punish vice proportionably by an absolute law. Now I ask, *Why* should we do this? And for myself I answer, We do this because by doing this we realize the greatest amount of good (not pleasure)[1]. But having said this, I begin to perceive that this law cannot be absolute. We are the servants of the law in one way; in another way, by identifying ourselves with the highest law, Do the most good, we override all lower laws and become their masters. Human life being as it is, we do most good by having rewards and punishments generally; and again, for the sake of the good, we are obliged (for obvious reasons) to go by a law. But then, all that being admitted, it does not follow that we may never go by another law which overrules the former.

And now I put it to you, if you were ruler, whether you would have an absolute law to reward virtue proportionably, or whether you would do it without a law. If the latter, how do you justify it? If the former, then are you not speaking of what *might* be best if the world were not the world it is, but rather what you wish it to be? Does not experience show that such a law would not be moral as things are, because it would do more harm than good?

I think we can easily see that we might have a state of society in which, if the ruler tried to distribute advantage and disadvantage by merit, he would produce on the whole less virtue and more vice. If so, what is it moral to do? Surely to go on the absolute law to do good, and to override all relative laws. Surely the law of retribution is one of these relative laws.

Morality, it seems to me, not only can but does approve of such a proceeding. No rational community tries to go by an absolute law of rewards and punishments. They all exercise for instance the right of pardon, because they do not believe that justice is the highest moral law. And morality sanctions what they do.

[1] Mr. Sidgwick does not yet (Mind, V. 32) seem to be aware that a man may be 'prepared to accept 'Common Good' as the ultimate end for which moral rules exist,' and yet reject Hedonism.

It is the old matter of collision of duties. For morality I am sure no law is absolutely imperative except the law, Realize the good; and *all* other laws must in theory be subordinate to this. In practice I do not say *all* are, because a collision may never be able to take place, but in practice again I am sure that this law of rewards and punishments is subordinated. In fact the highest moral law, before which all others must bow, is not justice; it does not directly distribute advantage and disadvantage to the individual, and stands above such a consideration.

Of course it must be understood that I am speaking of the world and morality as we know them. I recognize no other criterion. The world of our fancies and wishes, the home of absolute categorical imperatives, has no place in legitimate speculation.

What it comes to then, so far, is this. In human communities it is unjust not to reward and punish where there is a law to do so. It is right to have such a law where by doing so you realize most good. Otherwise it would not be right to have such a law. And where you have such a law it may be right to override it. Yes, I will say it, there *is* a duty to be unjust.

(2) If this is true, then the analogy as we had it was left incomplete. And moreover, in the second place, it is unfounded. I do not see how we have the means of judging from that which we do in human communities for the sake of the good, to that which is good and right to be done in the universe. We do not, and is it sceptical to add? we cannot fully know the conditions there. If any one wishes to maintain that *because* advantage and disadvantage do not coincide with virtue and vice, *therefore* the government of the world is not moral, he must be prepared to show that, if he were in power, he could produce less evil and more good than there is, by going on a law of rewards and punishments. In other language, supposing that in all cases the self-realization of each man as such were proportionate to the identification of his will with the will of the whole—would the will of the whole system be more intensely realized in fuller individuals?

I do not see how any man is to say, Yes; and, if he will not do that, his objection must fall.

The mere moral consciousness cannot pronounce on such questions as these. It sees its good and goods, and it knows its duty. Give it an hypothesis, an 'if,' and with care you may extract something from it; but it is a delicate matter to do so, for, if you put your case in the least one-sidedly, you are sure to get a wrong answer. And to turn an 'if' into an 'it is' is wholly beyond it. Let me remark in conclusion, that the reader who wishes to fall back on Omnipotence will find a good answer in Mr. Sidgwick, p. 469.

But from this theological discussion we cannot shut out religion. And, when we get there, it does seem that the notion of claiming reward for our merits and standing on our rights with God is a pre-Christian point of view, I had almost said an anachronism. We all know that one of the leading doctrines of Christianity is that not one man has any desert before the law, or can be justified except on his abnegation of every sort of claim. No one can deny that this is an important phenomenon of the religious consciousness, and I think it is not harsh to say that a theological discussion which overlooks or refuses to consider this fact as a fact, is a strangely one-sided account of the subject.

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It is natural at the end of our examination to ask ourselves what we think of the argument as a whole. It would be idle if I said anything else than that, as an argument to prove a thesis, I believe it has no value. I can find no unity of principle which holds its parts together. Rather I seem everywhere to have seen an attempt to unite irreconcileable points of view, which has failed because the criticism, which should first have loosened their opposition, has been wanting. Hedonism and Individualism on the one side, and abstract Rationalism on the other, have met but have not come together, and the result is a mere syncretism, a mechanical mixture of both.

I make no pretence to estimate the worth of the Methods of Ethics as a whole, but I may say thus much, that, as we have found an absence of criticism in its leading ideas, so it is far from being a complete collection of opinion on the subjects of which it treats. And this failure to take account of the views most opposed to traditional English doctrine has been at least one cause of the uncertain handling of leading conceptions, and the confusion in the result. On the other hand there is no doubt that the work is valuable; and it is obvious that there are two things in it which for some time will keep their place,—the examination of popular morality and the discussions on English thought. No book, it is safe to say, has been published for years which has done so much to stimulate ethical speculation amongst us, and in more senses than one to point to a reform in our moral philosophy.

# APPENDIX.

## Note A.

Whether the sum is to be realized as a summed series I do not know; but in Mind (V. 37) Mr. Sidgwick writes as if this might be his opinion. In this article he subjects to 'summary treatment' the objection against the sum of pleasures as stated by Mr. Green. I shall not presume to say anything on Mr. Green's behalf, who is far better able to defend himself than I him. But as Mr. Sidgwick has mentioned my name in the matter, I may point out that he has not made any attempt to meet the objections I raised in my book. He may please himself as to doing this, but he should not write as if he had done what he has not done. I asked, Is the sum finite or infinite? He has not answered. I asked, Is the end realized in life or after death? He has not answered. He is silent on the question of approximation as the end; and if he answers the question whether the sum is a series in time or coexistent, it is impossible to say what his answer is (*vide* Eth. Stud. 88–9, and note). If our author wishes the issue to be clear, he must first take the trouble to find out what he means by greatest sum of pleasures as the end, and not leave to a critic the task of conjecturing his views before he examines them.

So far as what Mr. Sidgwick has said bears on the general question I will endeavour to say what is required, though I can do little more than repeat the remarks in the text.

And first let me say that the question is whether we can *get* the Hedonistic end, *not* whether we can *aim* at it, and that it is time our author realized this distinction rather more clearly. Next, if Mr. Sidgwick means by 'greatest' an infinite sum, I refer him to my book (70, 89). If he

means a limited sum, then what he has to say seems to come to this. 'A finite greatest possible series in time can be summed, and hence greatest sum of pleasures may be gained, because the pleasures are had, though not all at once. And, again, the sum is a whole with parts, and you can have the whole by and in the parts.' (These of course are not his words.)

Now the question here is *not*, Can any finite series in time be considered as a whole with parts? The question is, (i) What does greatest possible sum mean? And, (ii) If the end is the realization of a series, can the end be realized *before* the series is summed? And if it is realized not before, is it realized at all?

(i) Mr. Sidgwick says 'we can aim at living as long as possible, without any regard to the manner of our living; and if we turn out centenarians, we shall commonly be thought to have succeeded in our aim' (37). This shows that our author has not even seen the difficulty. The assertion that A has lived as long as possible means, I should have thought, that under all the conditions, his will being one, a certain finite length of life was possible, and that he has lived it. The amount in comparison with other men is surely irrelevant, unless what is meant is that he has lived as long as it is possible for any human being to live, i. e. that there is a fixed maximum (say 100 years) which he has reached. If Mr. Sidgwick means this latter, and will also fix a maximum of pleasures, then I am quite ready to discuss such a view. But at present he has left us in the dark.

(ii) Next, if we make an end of living as long as possible, or an end of realizing the greatest possible amount of pleasure, can we attain these ends? and if so, how?

The end of living as long as possible is surely not gained until we die. The summing of the series is our extinction; and in and by that alone can we gain our object. So with the sum of pleasures. It may be said of a man, He got the sum of pleasures; but it cannot be said till all his pleasures are over. If a man said, 'I want long life,' when he was old he would have got it. If he says, 'I want a great sum of

pleasure in my life,' again a time may come when he can say, not 'I have it,' but 'I have had it.' But if he says 'longest' and 'greatest,' he is foredoomed to disappointment.

But the Good must surely be κτητὸν ἀνθρώπῳ. Surely it must be that which I can say I have now, not wait for until I am dead. Surely, again, to have had as much pleasure in life as possible is an object I never can say is mine. And is it not a mockery to tell us, You shall have the end of your being when you have ceased to be: the end is not to have but to have had; and when that comes you are gone?

Does it help us if we bring in the conception of whole and parts? Not in the least. It is the same thing over again. To say of a limited number of pleasures or days, This is part of the whole and so I realize the whole in this, is simply suicidal. For *any* number of moments or pleasures, no matter how small, are a 'part' of the sum; and the dilemma we are left with is as above. Either the end is realized in a part of the series, or it is realized only in the whole, which is not a whole till the series is summed. If the first is true then the end is *not* the sum; if the last is true *we* never get the end.

If this is not plain I am afraid I cannot make it plain. Let us say once more, The object of my life, my object in my life, is to live the greatest possible number of days. Do I, can I ever get for myself that object? Is it not to turn my life into the aim for a success which cannot come, to make life 'Death's fool,' a perpetual dying, where there is loss in every gain, and the end we live for, once gained, means in that moment the loss of all?

It is so with the pursuit of pleasure. If you will not put a limit to that which you want you never will get it. You never will be able to say, I have it. You never will be able even to say, I have had it. If this is not to aim at the unattainable, what is? And if my good is unattainable by me, is it good at all?

And now when we leave the individual, as we must if we are to follow Mr. Sidgwick, does not every difficulty become

still more difficult? The series of the pleasures of the sentient world is to be a whole with parts. If the end is to get a part, then *any* part is the end. If the end is to get the whole series, the series of the pleasures of the sentient world must be summed. Then I grant you the end has been, in one sense, attained; but I should like to ask, When does the time come? and who is it that gets, or has got the end?

The end as a coexisting aggregate has been considered in the text; and in ending this note I will ask the reader to believe that it is not for my own pleasure that I have wearied both him and myself with the subject.

## Note B.

What does *objective* mean for Mr. Sidgwick?

(i) It is opposed to 'the sensations of the sentient being which may vary from A to B without either being in error' (23, cf. 24). A judgment is not objective when you cannot raise the question of error (183; I abstain from criticism). But this so far tells us only what the objective is *not*.

(ii) There is a comparatively rare use by which it = that which I perceive as *not* my feeling self. 'Attitude of our minds' may be 'objective, extra-regarding rather than introspective,' i. e. directed not ón pleasures but 'external objects and particular activities' (133). It is opposed to 'the emotion that accompanies his cognition of this relation,' i. e. to some law or ideal represented as objective (371, cf. 24). In this sense however the objective seems indifferent to truth or error.

(iii) The next sense is, What is valid for all subjects? and at first it seems as if we might say, What I judge to be so valid (366). 'The objective judgment "that an end is good."' But here if I am wrong my judgment would be subjective merely, and we see that the true objective = what *is* valid for all subjects, and in this sense it seems = the subjectively necessary or normal. This perhaps is Mr. Sidgwick's most common usage.

Ought is objective; and 'this notion of "ought" . . . we may perhaps say, is a necessary form of our moral apprehension' (93). So beauty and 'the so-called secondary qualities of matter' are objective (24) because error is possible. In this sense the objective is opposed to what *we* like. It is 'an object of knowledge and as such the same for all minds,' and so has 'objective existence' (5). It is a 'standard' (96, cf. 187).

And in this signification of necessary or normal we could 'distinguish *real* from *believed*, or, as is now commonly said, "objective" from "subjective" rightness' (182, cf. 190, note); and understand 'that Right and Wrong are really objective: that is, the same, whether recognised or not, for all Minds or Subjects' (182). But Mr. Sidgwick means more than this by the term.

(iv). It = what is real apart from consciousness. It is the 'external aspect and relations' of an act (182): 'objective relations of the conscious subject, when distinguished in reflective analysis from the consciousness accompanying and resulting from them' (371): 'the relation between the mind and something else, which is whatever it is independently of our cognition of it' (370): 'objective constitution of the relations of conscious beings' (375). And so we have 'Objective Good,' *v.* 'Subjective Good or Happiness' (377).

We see, from p. 381, that this is the meaning of 'externally or objectively right' conduct: and must so interpret the opposition (182) of 'real' and 'believed,' and the objective character of Right and Wrong. This again seems meant when it is said (184) that 'no subjective criterion of duty, however important it may be, can help us to construct a system of objective rules of conduct.' And the 'objective rule or imperative' (62) may be something which is, whatever it is, out of relation to the mind.

I think it would have made things clearer if Mr. Sidgwick had been more explicit as to the meaning of this term. May I venture to refer him to Mr. Wallace's Logic of Hegel, p. 73?

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